



**Billing Code: 3510-22-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 622**

**[Docket No. 140501394-5279-02]**

**RIN 0648-XE629**

**Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic;  
2016 Commercial Accountability Measures and Closure for  
Blueline Tilefish in the South Atlantic Region**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS implements accountability measures (AMs) for commercial blueline tilefish in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic. Commercial landings for blueline tilefish are projected to reach the commercial annual catch limit (ACL) by June 1, 2016. Therefore, NMFS is closing the commercial sector for blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic EEZ at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 1, 2016, and it will remain closed until the start of the next fishing season on January 1, 2017. This closure is necessary to protect the blueline tilefish resource.

**DATES:** This rule is effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 1, 2016, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2017.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mary Vara, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, e-mail: *mary.vara@noaa.gov*.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes blueline tilefish and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and NMFS prepared the FMP, and the FMP is implemented under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

In Amendment 32 to the FMP (Amendment 32), NMFS implemented management measures to end overfishing of blueline tilefish. The final rule for Amendment 32 was effective on March 30, 2015 (80 FR 16583, March 30, 2015).

NMFS is required to close the commercial sector for blueline tilefish when the commercial ACL is reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register, as specified in 50 CFR 622.193(z)(1)(i). For 2016, the commercial ACL for blueline

tilefish is 26,766 lb (12,141 kg), round weight. NMFS has projected that the commercial ACL for South Atlantic blueline tilefish will be reached by June 1, 2016. Accordingly, the commercial sector for South Atlantic blueline tilefish is closed effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 1, 2016, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2017.

The operator of a vessel with a valid commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having blueline tilefish on board must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such blueline tilefish prior to June 1, 2016. During the closure, all sale or purchase of blueline tilefish is prohibited and harvest or possession of blueline tilefish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits specified in 50 CFR 622.187(b)(2)(iv) and 622.187(c)(1), respectively. These bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters.

#### **Classification**

The Regional Administrator for the NMFS Southeast Region has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the

conservation and management of blueline tilefish and the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(z)(1)(i) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries (AA) finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial sector for blueline tilefish constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such prior notice and opportunity for public comment are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the regulations at 50 CFR 622.193(z)(1)(i) and (iii) have already been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment are contrary to the public interest because there is a need to immediately implement this

action to protect blueline tilefish, since the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial ACL. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial ACL.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

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National Marine Fisheries Service.

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